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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [PTER](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: US ASSISTANCE CRITICAL TO STRATEGIC ALLIANCE WITH
TURKEY

REF: 05 ANKARA 6583

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Turkey plays a strategic role in US policy. A long-time US Ally, the second largest NATO member, an EU candidate, and a Western-oriented country that borders an area of US concern, Turkey is providing critical assistance to US efforts in both Iraq and Afghanistan, is pressing Iran to negotiate in good faith, is an active participant in the BMENA initiative, and is poised to do more. Our assistance programs provide a significant tool in the efforts. Military education and training programs counter anti-Americanism; export controls increase detection of WMD along a porous border; counter-terrorism programs support Turkey's efforts to protect US military and civilian facilities; and economic support in the poor southeast helps address the economic despair which provides a breeding ground for terrorism. Turkey's recovery from the devastating 2001 crisis is impressive but still fragile: a severe economic downturn or a return to anti-reform policies due to the lack of "trickle-down" are possible and would have negative implications beyond Turkey's borders. Dropping US assistance levels from our MPP request of \$53M to \$15.5M would have a very negative impact on programs that are critical to US priorities. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) In the 2008 MPP, we requested \$53M in FY08 US assistance funds to support the following US priorities: success in Iraq; combating terrorism; promoting economic reform; advancing democracy; and fostering the rule of law. The amount requested was calculated based on specific needs and expectations. While we understand that shoring up the governments in Iraq and Afghanistan are urgent priorities and that resources are limited, we urge the Department not to overlook the strategic importance of Turkey to success in both of those countries and beyond.

13. (C) Turkey has successfully led ISAF in Afghanistan twice and will soon join France and Italy in a shared command of the ISAF-Central region while simultaneously opening its first PRT in Wardak province. The GOT is constructing schools and hospitals and providing counter-narcotics training to Afghan security forces in Turkey. It plans to initiate counter-narcotics training in Afghanistan under its PRT.

14. (C) Close to 60% of all US air cargo for Iraq is delivered from the US cargo hub at Incirlik Air Base. Turkey also allows the US use of Incirlik for air-refueling operations in support of OIF and OEF. Together with Turkey, the US conducted a NATO air lift to Pakistan from Incirlik after the 2005 earthquake there. The Habur border crossing provides a lifeline for the Iraqi people and US troops in Iraq. Two-thirds of all humanitarian fuel and 25% of coalition sustainment fuel cross through that gate. Turkey has also trained almost sixty Iraqi military officers through the NATO Training Mission in Iraq and scores of Iraqi diplomats. Turkey has also been actively engaged in the BMENA initiative, co-sponsoring a democracy workshop and actively participating in Finance Ministerial meetings.

FMF and IMET Critical to Mil-Mil Relations

15. (C) To ensure its continued role as a valued NATO member and reliable military partner, Turkey is modernizing its armed forces -- the largest among our NATO Allies -- and training a peacekeeping brigade. Throughout the 1970's and 1980's, Turkey procured extensive US military equipment to ensure that its military was US and NATO compatible. It has the second largest fleet of F-16s outside of the US (after Israel) and a large fleet of Cobra and Blackhawk helicopters.

16. (C) As this equipment ages or becomes outdated, Turkey is looking to upgrade or replace it, increasingly via direct commercial sales (DCS). In addition to ensuring a competitive price, DCS allows Turkey to insist on significant work packages for its local industry, extensive technology transfer, and corporate liability requirements that US firms are increasingly finding too onerous to bear. Boeing and Bell withdrew from the competition for up to 91 attack helicopters. Sikorsky and Raytheon are currently weighing the risk of participation in two outstanding tenders. The technology transfer issue may also impact Turkey's decision about whether to commit to its pledged purchase of 100 Joint Strike Fighter (F-35) aircraft.

17. (C) The Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program provides an incentive for Turkey to buy American. FMF dollars help Turkey maintain and upgrade its US equipment at a low cost and from US suppliers. The Turkish military regularly emphasizes its preference for US equipment, but is fighting a government that wants to spend as little as possible on defense, and is attempting to use its limited dollars to build up its defense industry and to court Europeans. While the US cannot dictate to Turkey how to spend these funds, FMF strengthens the link between our two militaries and provides the Turkish military with some leverage against the government in favor of US equipment.

18. (C) Turkey typically divides FMF among the three services as follows: 50% to Land Forces -- the largest and most powerful service (TGS Chiefs have historically come from the Land Forces), 25% each to the Naval Forces and to the Air Force. The Land Forces used FY04/05 funds to buy thermal sites, helicopter spare parts, mobile satellite terminals and radios, among other things. The Naval Forces upgraded their gas turbines and the Harpoon fire control systems on their Perry Class ships. The Air Force was able to perform an early F-16 weapons upgrade and add AIM-9X missiles to its inventory. Our FY08 FMF request is consistent with historical levels and will be used to ensure a continued place for US equipment in Turkey. At this level, we can help to develop Turkish military capabilities to permit more robust contributions to peacekeeping operations; perform more complex tasks together with us; and deter potential adversaries on NATO's most volatile border.

19. (C) International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds provide the biggest, most immediate, bang for the buck. Turkey utilizes its IMET funding to send, on average, over 250 mid-level officers and senior NCOs to the US to attend nearly 350 courses, with an emphasis on post-graduate

education. The greatest value of these courses is the time these officers spend in the US with Americans, learning how we organize ourselves, communicate, and interact on a professional and personal level. The results are immediate. These officers return to Turkey enthusiastic about working with the US. They bring back ideas for how to better promote their agenda, interact with other government agencies, and move issues forward. These experiences stick with them and form an immediate bond between the participating officers and US military in Turkey. They protect us against anti-Americanism in the Turkish military ranks.

¶10. (C) To maximize their IMET funding, however, Turkey needs adequate advance notification in order to ensure sufficient per diem funds in the TGS budget. The fluctuation in our funding levels has in the past has, at times, required TGS to use some of the IMET funds to cover student per diem. With early notification, TGS should be able to maximize the funds contributed to course tuition. A cut in IMET below the \$5M requested level will have a negative impact that is many times greater.

Expanding Economic Opportunities To The Most Vulnerable

¶11. (SBU) Despite Turkey's strong economic growth from 2002 to 2005, the country continues to face massive social and developmental challenges. Turkey ranks 94th on the UNDP's Human Development Index, behind Jordan, Belize, Sri Lanka, Armenia, the Philippines and Peru -- but does not have a USAID presence. Adult literacy is only 88.3%. Turkey had a per capita GDP of merely \$5K in 2005, and this figure masks massive regional, gender and social differences. In southeastern Turkey -- the region most vulnerable to terrorist persuasion -- only 3% of young people attend university. Female literacy is only 81.1% and infant mortality, at 33 per 1,000 births, is high for a middle-income country. Turkey's 11% unemployment rate understates the severity of the unemployment problem since a significant portion of the labor force does not seek or has given up seeking employment, particularly among women.

¶12. (SBU) As important as the need, however, is the public affairs dimension of ESF assistance for social sector projects such as cash transfers to poor families to keep their daughters in school. As ref B noted, our \$9M FY04 ESF contribution to the Conditional Cash Transfer project was highly successful both from a development impact perspective and in terms of public relations. We were able to use the \$9M to leverage a \$250M World Bank program. The most recent Pew poll found that only 12% of Turks have a favorable view of the US. Moreover, the Turkish public tends to view the US as disinterested in the plight of ordinary Turks: to the extent we are perceived as caring about Turkey it is as a strategic partner or through IMF support which is considered to be indifferent to the daily hardships of the man-on-the-street. However small our ESF allocation, by publicizing it, we can change the headlines about the US while contributing to worthwhile, badly-needed, projects.

¶13. (SBU) ESF in particular, and US assistance in general, also help keep Turkey on the economic reform track. If the perceived absence of "trickle down" from Turkey's recent economic success undermines political commitment to economic reform, Turkey could return either to a severe economic downturn or deviate from its reformist policies. If Turkey's economy goes into a severe recession it will affect the economies of Turkey's many neighbors, potentially impacting US goals in the Caucasus, Aegean, Balkans, Black Sea and Middle East. Moreover, as the "poster child" for IMF-sponsored reforms, either economic problems or a rejection of reform will have negative implications for economic reformers in other Emerging Markets, reinforcing anti-reform movements in Latin America. US bilateral assistance sends a signal of support for continued reform and ESF counters the perception that reform policies have not helped ordinary Turks.

Strengthening Turkey's Export Control
and Counter-Terrorism Measures

¶14. (S/NF) We welcome the possibility of an increase in both the NADR and counter-terrorism funds. Turkey shares borders with several countries of concern. While Turkey is working with the US and EU to improve the security of these borders, terrain and other factors render this difficult and porous sections remain vulnerable to the trafficking of drugs, humans, weapons and WMD. Weapons destined for the Iraqi Security Forces are increasingly turning up in Turkey, one of which was used to kill a foreign priest and another which may have been used in the recent shooting of five judges at the Council of State (Note: the investigation is ongoing. End Note.) Turkey has identified and stopped the transit of WMD components destined for other countries in the region. While Turkey is demonstrating greater efforts and successes in securing its borders, its resources are stretched. Additional counter-terrorism and export control training and technology will go a long way towards helping this Ally in GWOT to keep its territory from being utilized to base or support a terrorist act against the US or other Western target.

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WILSON